

A movie poster for the film 'Primary Colors'. It features a close-up of three people in profile, looking towards the right. From left to right: John Travolta, Emma Thompson, and a Black man. They are all wearing dark suits. An American flag is visible in the background on the right side. The title 'PRIMARY COLORS' is written in large, red, serif capital letters at the bottom. Above the title, the names 'JOHN TRAVOLTA' and 'EMMA THOMPSON' are listed in white, serif capital letters. Below their names, 'A MIKE NICHOLS FILM' is written in smaller white capital letters. At the very bottom, an orange banner contains the words 'PENGUIN READERS' in white capital letters.

JOHN TRAVOLTA
EMMA THOMPSON

A MIKE NICHOLS FILM

PRIMARY COLORS

PENGUIN READERS

Primary Colors

Anonymous

Level 4

Retold by Brent Furnas

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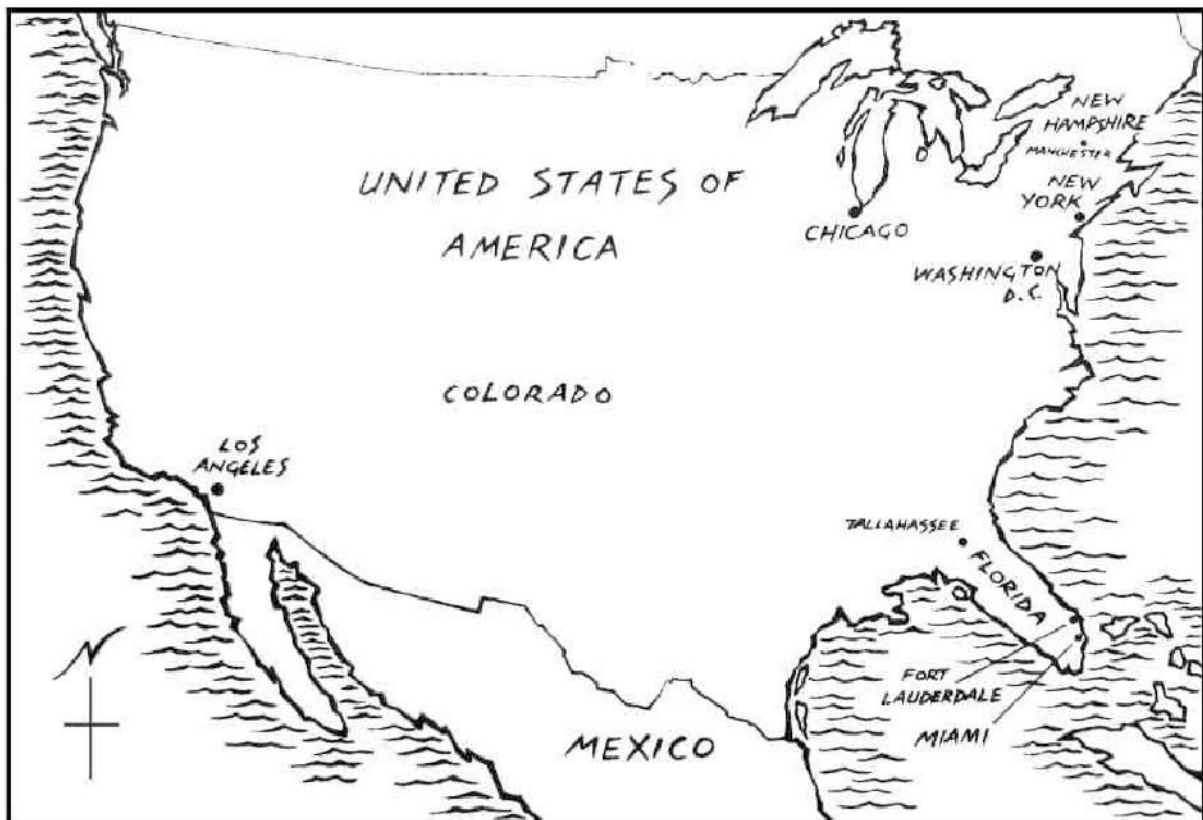
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Introduction

I wasn't sure that I wanted to work for Jack. Still, there was something different about him . . .

Jack Stanton is the governor of a state in the southern USA. He wants to be President, and he wants Henry Burton to help him. At first, Henry is happy to work with Jack, but he begins to worry when he sees that Stanton will do *anything* to win . . .

The author of *Primary Colors* is an American journalist. Although it is a fictional story, the author used his personal knowledge of a real American President to write it. That is why he decided to keep his name a secret. *Primary Colors* was made into a successful movie, with John Travolta as Governor Stanton.





“This is Governor Jack Stanton,” said the teacher. “He’s now running for President. Would you like to say a few words, Governor Stanton?”

Chapter 1 Governor Jack Stanton: The Best

I'll always remember the moment that I met Jack Stanton outside the library in Harlem, New York City. My first thought was that he looked strange in Harlem. Stanton is white and most of the people who live in Harlem are black, like me.

"You're the guy that I've been hearing about," he said as he shook my hand. All politicians are good at shaking hands but Jack Stanton is the best. I've seen him do it two million times now and I still don't understand exactly *how* he does it. It's actually his *left* hand that makes him so good. He might put it on your elbow to show you that he's interested in you. He might squeeze your shoulder with it and tell you a joke. He might just hold your wrist and look into your eyes. I remember that he squeezed my shoulder that day in Harlem, and then he was gone, shaking someone else's hand. I followed Howard Ferguson into the library where a teacher began to tell us about her program. She taught adults how to read.

Howard leaned over and whispered, "I'm glad you're here, Henry. Jack really wants you to work for him. He thinks you're the best."

I wasn't sure that I wanted to work for Jack. I was tired of politics. I had quit working for Senator William Larkin after six years and I was happy with my job as a college teacher.

Still, there was something different about Jack Stanton. When most white politicians arrive in New York City, they go to Wall Street—that's where the businessmen work and that's where the money is—but Jack Stanton had gone to Harlem instead. That interested me.

The students were waiting for their reading lesson to begin.

"This is Governor Jack Stanton," said the teacher. "He's now running for President. Would you like to say a few words, Governor Stanton?"

He smiled and said, "Not just yet," in his slow, southern accent.

We watched the lesson. When it was over the students told the Governor about themselves. The last student to speak was a young man named Dewayne Smith. He weighed at least three hundred pounds.

"I failed in school because I couldn't read," he said. "I kept going to school but I still didn't learn to read. I felt stupid as a rock and nobody cared. Nobody said, 'Dewayne, you can't read, you need help.' I saw all the other kids reading books and it made me so sad." I looked at Jack Stanton. His face was red and there were tears in his eyes. "Dewayne," he said. "I am very grateful that you shared that with us. Now let me tell you a story about my Uncle Charlie. Charlie was a hero in World War Two. He saved twenty American soldiers in a battle with the Japanese. When he came home he was famous; the whole town had a big party for him. People said, 'Charlie, what are you going to do now?' A rich man offered to pay for him to go to college. Someone else offered him a job as the manager of a bank. Everybody wanted to give Charlie a job. Do you know what Charlie did?"

"No," said Dewayne. "What did he do?"

"Nothing. He just lay on the sofa and smoked his cigarettes."

"Was he a little crazy because of the war?" asked a woman.

"No," said Stanton. "It was because he couldn't read."

"What?"

"That's right," said Stanton. "He couldn't read and he was too embarrassed to tell anyone. He was brave enough to be a hero in World War Two but he wasn't brave enough to do what you people are doing right now. When people ask me, 'Jack Stanton, why do you spend so much money on government programs to teach adults to read?' I tell them that it gives me a chance to meet real heroes. People like you. I am very grateful you let me visit you today."

They loved him. They shook his hand and put their arms around

him. He didn't back away the way that most politician do. He loved them just as much as they loved him. I think that's one of the things that makes Stanton so special; he just loves people.

"He's very good," Howard Ferguson whispered to me. "Don't you want to work for him?"

Stanton walked up to us. "Where do we go now, Howard?"

"The *Times* offices. We have to hurry."

Stanton looked at me and said, "Henry, can you meet us at the Regency Hotel at eleven o'clock tonight?"

"Eleven o'clock?" It seemed very late.

"What's the matter?" laughed Stanton. "Are you going to a party?"

"No."

"Then we'll see you at the Regency at eleven."



Stanton had several rooms at the Regency and they were all busy. There were a dozen campaign workers talking on telephones, typing on computers and eating sandwiches.

"Henry Burton!"

I turned and saw a man that I knew.

"It's good to see you," he said. "I'm glad you're working for Stanton too."

"Well, I'm not sure that I'm going to . . ."

"He thinks you're great, Henry. Just great! We're going to win this, you know. Jack Stanton is going to be the next President of the United States of America."

"I hope so!" said a voice behind us.

We both turned around to see Jack Stanton. He had just opened his bedroom door and was buttoning his shirt.

"Hello, Henry!" he laughed. "I'm glad you're working for us."

"Well, I'm not sure . . ." I stopped speaking because I saw

there was a woman in the bedroom with Stanton. She was getting dressed too.

“Henry,” said Stanton, “you remember Ms. Baum don’t you?”

I did. She was the teacher at the library in Harlem. When she had finished buttoning her blouse, she walked to the bedroom door and said, “Well Governor. It was nice to . . .”

“Don’t you think that Ms. Baum has a great program there in Harlem, Henry?” asked Stanton.

He put his hand on her shoulder then leaned over and whispered something in her ear. She smiled and walked away.

“Governor!” shouted one of the campaign workers. “Your wife is on the phone.”

He handed Stanton a pocket telephone. Stanton took a bite from a sandwich, then spoke into the phone. “Hi, honey . . . I know and I’m sorry. I tried to call you from Harlem . . . Tonight?” He put his hand over the phone. “Charlie?”

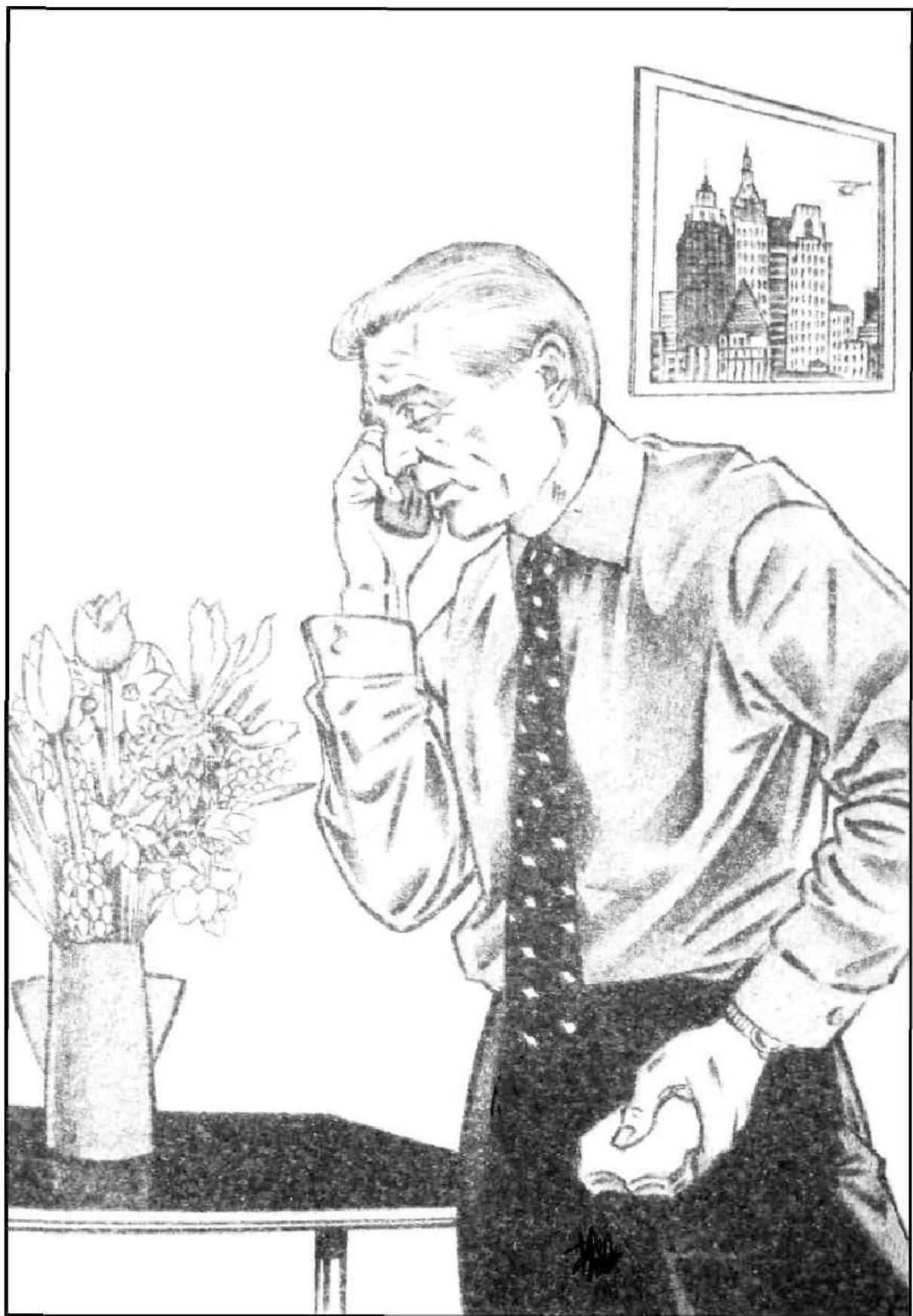
A little old man walked up to Stanton.

“Charlie,” said Stanton. “Did you forget about a meeting with some people from the New Hampshire Democratic Party* tonight?”

Charlie just smiled.

“Charlie!” Stanton put the phone to his ear. “Susan? I’m sorry. Charlie forgot. I meant to call you from Harlem . . . Susan, listen . . . Susan? Of course I love you . . . Listen, honey, everything’s going to be okay. I mean it. Susan? . . .”

* Most Americans who vote for President are members of one of the two main political parties: the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. Before the final election for President, there are smaller elections called primary elections in every state. In the primary elections Americans vote for a politician who is a member of their own party—the Democrats vote for Democratic politicians and the Republicans vote for Republican politicians. The winners of these primary elections then run against each other in the final Presidential election that is held over the whole nation a few months later.



*“Susan? I’m sorry. Charlie forgot. I meant to call you from Harlem . . .
Susan, everything’s going to be okay. I mean it. Susan? . . .”*

He put the telephone down. "I'd better go to New Hampshire. Where's the airplane?"

"Teteboro Airport," answered somebody.

"Okay! Let's go! Let's go! Are you coming Henry?"

"What?" New Hampshire was a long way from New York. I wasn't ready to travel.

Stanton went in the bathroom. When he came out again he handed me a toothbrush and a comb.

"Is there anything else you need?"

"I have to teach tomorrow."

"Tell them you're sick. Let's go."

"I have all your clothes right here, Governor," said Charlie. He was carrying a suitcase.

"Henry," said Stanton. "This is my Uncle Charlie, the war hero."



Jack Stanton's wife was waiting for us at Manchester Airport in New Hampshire.

"Susan Stanton," she said as she shook my hand.

"Henry Burton."

"I'm glad you're here. Jack Stanton needs someone like you because he doesn't have a brain in his head!"

"Aw, honey," said Stanton. He tried to put his arm on her shoulder, but she pushed him away.

"Jack," she said, "in the American primary election, the first state to vote is New Hampshire. It's very important that you win here in New Hampshire. But if you're going to win the election here in New Hampshire, you have to be *perfect*. You can't tell people you'll meet them and then not do it."

"Aw, honey," said Stanton. "We worked hard in New York. Henry and I went to a library in Harlem where adults were learning to read. The teacher was . . ."

“She was *what*?” said Susan.
“She was a wonderful teacher,” I said quickly.
“That’s right,” said Stanton. “She was a wonderful teacher.”
We walked toward a waiting car.
“Are you going to work for us?” Susan Stanton asked me.
“What do you want me to do?”
“Help Jack. Help him run for President of the United States. He’s going to win.”

Chapter 2 Trouble with the Press

Jack Stanton was the governor of a state in the southern United States. The biggest city in the state was Mammoth Falls. During the first few months of the campaign, I spent about half of my time there.

My best friend in Mammoth Falls was Richard Jemmons. He also worked for Stanton. He was very intelligent, very nervous, very thin, and always worrying. He worried about scandals. He used to call me several times a day.

“Did you hear anything, Henry?” he asked one day. “I’m worried that the press is going to find something.”

“What are they going to find?”

“That’s the problem. We don’t know! Maybe drugs! Maybe women! I think we should investigate Stanton. That way we’ll know about the bad things he’s done before the press does.”

“We’re doing fine, Richard,” I said. “Stop worrying.”

But Richard was right to worry. Our problems started after the first television debate in New Hampshire on January 17th. When the debate was over I noticed one of Stanton’s workers talking to a tall journalist. She looked a little frightened, so I went to see what was wrong.

“Hi.” I said.

“Mr. Burton.” said the journalist, “maybe you can help me. Was Governor Stanton arrested during the Vietnam War*?”

The Vietnam War was something that we were worried about. The Americans who had fought in it were the same age as Stanton. But instead of fighting in Vietnam, Stanton had stayed in America and protested against the war.

“I don’t know,” I answered. “I can ask him and tell you later.”

“All right.” He handed me a card that said *Los Angeles Times*.

I found Stanton with Susan and Uncle Charlie. He looked nervous. “Let’s go, let’s go, let’s go!” he said. We went outside and hurried across the snow.

The reporter was waiting for us by our van. “Governor Stanton,” he said calmly, “were you ever arrested in a protest against the Vietnam War?”

“No,” said Stanton.

“Are you *sure*?”

“I protested against the war. Everyone knows that.”

“But you weren’t arrested on August 16, 1968, in Chicago during a protest led by Abbie Hoffman?”

Stanton didn’t seem worried. “I wasn’t arrested. The police stopped me and then let me go. They made a mistake.”

“So you weren’t arrested?”

“No. I was in Chicago visiting friends. I joined a protest. The police made a mistake.”

We got into the van and drove away.

That Saturday we drove through New Hampshire followed by

* In 1965 the United States sent American soldiers to help South Vietnam fight against its communist neighbor, North Vietnam. But the American army had very little success and by 1968, the war had become unpopular with the American people. The Americans finally left Vietnam in 1973 and, two years later, North Vietnam won the war.

two vans full of reporters. In a small town named Laconia I watched Stanton at work, shaking hands with people and listening to their problems. I watched an old woman put her arms around him. "You remind me of President Kennedy," she said. "He came to Laconia too. You're not as thin as he was, but you're just as handsome."

We were about to get back inside the van when a reporter ran up and said, "Governor Stanton, the *Los Angeles Times* says that you were arrested during a protest against the Vietnam war in 1968."

"Yes, I know," said Stanton. "The police stopped me, but they didn't arrest me. They made a mistake."

"The *Los Angeles Times* also says that you called a United States Senator who was a friend of yours. You asked him to tell the police to let you go."

"I don't know about that," said Stanton.



The next morning we had breakfast in the Stantons' hotel room. There was coffee and eggs and bacon.

"The *Los Angeles Times* story is terrible," said Susan. "Jack wasn't a criminal."

"No," said my friend Richard, "but people *think* he was a criminal."

"People don't care about that kind of thing," said Susan.

"The *press* cares about that kind of thing," said Richard, "so we have to care about that kind of thing too. The problem is, we're doing our jobs blind!"

"What are you talking about?" asked Susan.

Daisy Green, a thin, intelligent young woman who worked as one of Stanton's advisors, answered. "I think Richard means that we need to know more about Governor Stanton, and not just the

good things. We need to know the bad things too. That way we'll be more prepared to answer questions from the press."

"You mean we need a detective to investigate my husband?" asked Susan.

"Yes," said Richard.

My pocket telephone rang.

"Hello?"

"Henry!" I recognized the voice of one of Stanton's campaign workers. "I'm waiting for Stanton. He's about to come out of a church, but there are at least forty journalists here. They've all read the *Los Angeles Times* story and they're waiting to ask him about what happened in Chicago."

"Okay, listen," I said. "Go in and tell him the press is outside. Tell him to act like he has nothing to hide, okay?"

"Thanks, Henry."

I put my telephone away. "The press is waiting for him," I said. "They're going to ask him about Chicago."

"You see, Susan?" said Richard. "We need to know about things like Chicago. We're *blind* right now."



It was rainy and cold that evening when Daisy knocked on my hotel door.

"Are you still awake?" She pushed past me, sat down on my bed and turned on my TV. "The television in my room is broken."

"Daisy," I said. "I'm really tired."

"Then go to sleep."

I did. But when I woke up an hour later, Daisy was lying next to me, her hand on my chest.

"Stanton's arrest in Chicago was on the news," she said. "Richard's right. We need someone to investigate Stanton."

Then she kissed me. It was our first kiss and it went on for a

long time. Finally she stopped and said, “I don’t think the *Los Angeles Times* story will hurt Stanton.”



The next morning Richard, Daisy, and I met with Susan Stanton in her hotel room.

“Okay” Susan said slowly. “We’ll investigate Jack, but we’ll tell him about it. And we’ll get Libby Holden to do it.”

“Libby Holden?” asked Richard.

Susan nodded.

“Is she okay? Is she out of the hospital?”

Susan nodded.

“Is she still crazy?”

Susan just smiled.

Chapter 3 Cashmere McLeod

Two days later I was back in the campaign office in Mammoth Falls when Libby Holden walked in. She was an enormous woman with angry blue eyes and long gray hair. Everyone in the office stopped working to look at her. She stormed up to my desk and shouted, “I’m HERE!”

“Hello, I’m Henry Burton.”

“Ah HAH!” she answered.

“Was Stanton arrested in Chicago?” I asked.

“OF COURSE he was!” shouted Libby.

“Did he ask a Senator to tell the police to let him go?”

“Of COURSE he did! He’s guilty, guilty, GUILTY! But we don’t have to worry about CHICAGO! Chicago is a LITTLE problem. We have a BIG problem—Cashmere McLeod.”

“Who’s Cashmere McLeod?”



Libby was an enormous woman with angry blue eyes and long gray hair. Everyone in the office stopped working to look at her.

“Jack Stanton’s lover!”

“His lover?”

“Yes, stupid, his lover! She’s going to tell the *National Flash* all about Jack Stanton. The *National Flash* is going to pay her a hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars. She’s working with a lawyer named Randy Culligan on this.”

“Are you sure about this?” I asked.

“NO! I’m telling you this because I’m crazy. OF COURSE I’M SURE!”

“When did this happen?” I asked. “When did Stanton meet her?”

“1989. Maybe it was 1988.” She took a book out of her big leather bag and quickly turned the pages. “Here,” she said. “Jack Stanton drove Cashmere McLeod home from a party on the night of April 12, 1989. He stayed at her house for an hour. What do you think they did during that hour? Do you think they PLAYED CARDS?”



As one problem got better the other got worse. That Thursday morning, just as people were starting to forget about Chicago, Cashmere McLeod’s picture appeared on the cover of the *National Flash*. I was in the hotel in New Hampshire when I saw it. I was surprised at the photograph; Cashmere McLeod had an odd nose and strange lips. The telephone in my hotel room rang while I was reading the story.

“We have TROUBLE, Henry! We have big TROUBLE!”

“Good morning, Libby,” I said.

“She’s got tape recordings!”

“Who does?”

“CASHMERE MCLEOD!”

“Tape recordings of what?”

“Try not to be so STUPID! What do you *think* are on her tape recordings? The Beatles? She’s got tapes of Jack Stanton talking to her on the telephone! LOVE tapes, Henry. They talked about SEX!”

“What’s she going to do with them?”

“She’s going to play them for the press tomorrow. It will be on television! Come back to Mammoth Falls as fast as you can, Henry. Go wake up Jack and Susan Stanton. Tell them that Cashmere has love tapes, then get on a plane for Mammoth Falls.”

“You think I should tell them now?” I said. “They’re going to be interviewed on television in three hours. Maybe I should wait until they’re finished.”

“BRILLIANT, Henry. You’re BRILLIANT. Do you want someone to tell Jack and Susan that Cashmere has sex tapes while they’re on TELEVISION? In front of MILLIONS OF AMERICANS?”

I went down the hall and knocked on the Stantons’ door. Susan was sitting at a table drinking tea and reading a newspaper. Jack was trying to decide which tie to wear.

“Governor,” I said. “I just talked to Libby. She says that Cashmere McLeod has tape recordings of you and her talking on the telephone. She’s going to play them for the press tomorrow.”

Susan stood up, raised her hand, and hit her husband hard across his face. It was a perfect shot and made an ugly noise. Stanton was still for a moment, then he reached up and gently touched the skin on his cheek.

“I’m sorry,” he said.

“Henry,” said Susan, “would you please excuse us?”



I saw the interview on television.